

In response to a recent FCC Public Notice (WT 07-230) regarding the requirement to change MMSI numbers when cruising internationally... I am writing to ask the FCC to fix their system so boaters can avoid this unneeded inconvenience and cost.

Due to a glitch in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing system, MMSI's issued by BoatUS are now seen as "invalid" when later wanting to obtain an FCC radio license. BoatUS is trying to fix this problem, but no resolution yet.

Background:

Even though the MMSI VHF radio numbers issued by BoatUS come from the FCC, the FCC's radio licensing system does not accept our MMSI numbers (or those issued by any other private entity) back into their database. This problem occurs when a boater who obtained a number from BoatUS, intended for those boating only on U.S. waters and not needing a license, later decides to cruise to foreign ports and applies for an FCC Ship Station License, as currently required. The BoatUS MMSI numbers are rejected by the FCC, forcing the boater to (1) obtain a new MMSI number from the FCC and (2) go to the trouble and expense of getting their DSC radio reprogrammed with the new number. This often requires sending the radio back to the manufacturer or a service agency with fees.

In May, a petition was filed with the FCC to correct this problem by the National GMDSS Implementation Task Force, of which BoatUS is a member.

The FCC just released a Public Notice on this petition seeking comments from vessel operators on the inconvenience and cost of embedding new MMSI numbers in DSC VHF marine radios.

The notice can be found at: http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-07-4212A1.doc

Please Note... We want this problem fixed so that privately issued MMSI numbers are "portable," the same policy granted to cell phone users. As more people retire and decide to go cruising, this problem is very likely to get worse. The time to correct it is now!

The integrity of the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue system depends upon boaters properly registering their radios. Any unnecessary problems in doing so will deter people from registering or obtaining a license from the FCC.